

Captain Walter Thorp House
198 Oxford Road
Southport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-307

HABS
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1-SCUPO
19 -

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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CAPTAIN WALTER THORP HOUSE

Location: 198 Oxford Road, Southport, Fairfield County,
Connecticut.

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Trans-
verse Mercator Coordinates: 18.643060.4554870.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Peter B. Smith.

Present Owner: Residence.

Statement of
Significance: Captain Thorp's house is a representative example
of Southport's local vernacular during the 1820s
and 30s. Unlike some of the village's residences
erected in the early nineteenth century, this
building was designed on a relatively modest scale
with attenuated classical details. The rectangular
mass's distinctive characteristics are the one-story
portico supported by fluted Greek Doric columns
with a simplified entablature, an oval window filled
with radiating mullions piercing the front gable
pediment, and a delicately proportioned architrave
and cornice over the principal windows.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1820-30. No information is known
to exist which would be helpful in determining the date
this house was built. Local architecture during this
period, built for men of comparable economic standing as
Captain Thorp, was designed along the same general outlines.
The Paschal Sheffield house, 104 Old South Road (CONN-303)
was built 1826, and is one residence of approximately the
same scale, design and construction as the Thorp house.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The property upon which the
house stands includes five acres of land, bounded by roads
on the south and east, private property on the north and
Sasco Creek on the west. The following chain of title to
this property was compiled by Mrs. Peter B. Smith, present
owner of the residence.

1872 Captain Walter Thorp willed the property to his wife
Elizabeth Thorp. Upon her death, Elizabeth Thorp

willed the property to her daughter Elizabeth Hetty Burr, wife of Rev. Zalmon B. Burr.

- 1878 Elizabeth Hetty Burr willed the property to her husband Zalmon B. Burr.
 - 1892 Zalmon B. Burr willed the property to his second wife Ida F. Burr. Upon her death Ida Burr willed the property to her daughter Jennie Burr Penney and her sister Minnie Connell.
 - 1933 Jennie Burr Penney sold the property to Hettie Cumming.
 - 1937 Hettie Cumming was declared incompetent and the property was sold to Harriet Hughes.
 - 1944 Harriet Hughes sold the property to Pehr Sparre.
 - 1948 Pehr Sparre sold the property to Marion Willard.
 - 1955 Marion Willard sold the property to the State of Connecticut.
 - 1955 The State of Connecticut sold the property to Westerling.
 - 1963 Westerling sold the property to Peter B. Smith.
3. Original plan and construction: The original structure probably consisted of the two-and-a-half story rectangular section with the gable pediment facing front (south). The house was moved from its original site on the five-acre property to the present location in 1954-55 when the Connecticut turnpike was constructed. The two-story wing at the east was a later addition. For a complete description of the structure see Part II, Architectural Information.

B. Bibliography:

Notes of Mrs. Peter B. (Kathleen H.) Smith, owner, 198 Oxford Road, Southport.

Prepared by Jan E. Cigliano
Staff Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
January 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Thorp house is a good example of the local vernacular during the 1820s and 30s. The rectangular mass's distinctive characteristics are the one-story front portico supported by fluted Greek Doric columns with a simplified entablature, an oval window with radiating mullions which pierces the gable pediment, and a delicately proportioned architrave and cornice over the principal windows.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-and-a-half story structure is L-shaped and measures 30' (three-bay south front) x 45' with a wing at the east which measures twenty feet square.
2. Foundations: Rubble masonry with cement facing.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Eight-inch butt-boarding covers the first-story portico facade; horizontal clapboarding is on all other surfaces.
4. Structural system, framing: Timber mortise-and-tenon frame construction.
5. Porches, porticos, stoops: One-story portico extends across the front facade of the main section. Attenuated fluted Greek Doric columns, corresponding to fluted Doric pilasters on the back wall, support an entablature of four-inch architrave, cyma recta and filet molding, six-inch smooth plain frieze, and projecting molded cornice. The portico has wooden board flooring and shed roof which is five feet deep. A small porch is on the west side, and is supported by a slender turned post.
6. Chimneys: A recently rebuilt brick chimney rises above the center of the ridge of the main section.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main (south) doorway has a plain surround and is flanked by side lights and a fixed transom overhead. Both side lights and transom are divided into several small panes by thin mullions.
 - b. Windows: All windows on the main section are twelve-over-twelve light double-hung sash. First-floor openings on the front facade have plain wooden surrounds with a filet molding around the outer edge. All other

principal windows in the main section are topped by an architrave and cornice and flanked by modern lattice shutters. The gable pediment is ornamented with an oval window trimmed with four keystones and radiating mullions. First-story openings in the wing have six-over-six light double-hung sash windows with shutters and cornice as on the principal mass. Second-story windows are six-over-twelve light and trimmed with plain surrounds and lattice shutters.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof covered with wooden shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A simple raking cornice with a plain smooth architrave and frieze articulates the roof and eave line.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Side hall plan with front and back parlors. The dining room is behind the stair hall. An adjoining wing is to the east.
- b. Second floor: Lay-out corresponds to first-floor partitions.

2. Stairways: Main stair to the second floor has a straight run, turning at a right angle and rising four steps. The stairs are trimmed with turned balusters and newel post.

3. Flooring: Six-inch board flooring throughout.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are papered; ceiling is finished with plaster.

5. Doorways and doors: Doorway surrounds consist of a corner block molding with five smooth fascia strips, inset at progressive steps toward the opening.

6. Decorative features and trim: The fireplace in the front parlor is framed by classical pilasters and a bulky architrave. The back parlor's fireplace is surrounded by eight-inch wide vertical boarding trimmed with delicate moldings and built-in cabinets.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Lighting: Modern electrical wiring and fixtures.

b. Heating: Central heating system.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house is sited forty-five degrees west of due north on low rising ground.
2. Historic landscape design: The house was moved from its original site in 1954-55 to the present location when the Connecticut Turnpike was constructed.

Prepared by David T. Van Zanten
Team Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1966

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Southport Historic District Commission, several members of whom provided the necessary funds. The project was completed in the summer of 1966 under the general direction of James C. Massey, then the Chief of HABS; Ralph Schwarz of the Ford Foundation; and Architect John C. Waite (Columbia University); with assistant architects Christopher Benninger (Harvard University), Richard Haines (University of Kentucky), and Andrew Craig Morrison (University of Michigan), and architectural historian David T. Van Zanten (Harvard University), at the HABS Field Office in Southport, Connecticut. The data was prepared and edited in HABS Washington office in January 1979 by Jan E. Cigliano, staff historian. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in September 1966.